

29 Sept 65

Memo: to Ambassador Lodge
From: Mr. Lansdale
Subject: Returning Used Chicom Weapons

1. The GVN now has fairly large stocks of some captured Chinese Communist weapons and ammunition: e.g., over 5000 individual weapons including over 900 Chicom submachine guns (with Chinese markings showing) and 3000 carbines, and almost 300 crew-served weapons including 150 light machine guns.
2. Since ARVN has no very good use for these weapons, I ~~suggest~~ propose we suggest to the GVN that they give them back. They could be distributed widely over the countryside of North Vietnam, dropped by parachute along with a starter-set of ammunition. They would be dramatic evidence to the North Vietnamese ~~peasants~~ of the role their government--spurred on by the Chicoms--is playing in the South. And some peasants in the North might decide to put these toys away for a rainy day; they might even find a good use for them in the short run. At any rate, the DRV would have to worry about such possibilities; the DRV would have the fun of carrying on continuous nationwide searches for "returned" armament, never knowing how much had been dropped and how much might still be hiding in the hands of their loyal citizens. A few empty cases, discovered by the NVN authorities, would look to them like opened Pandora's boxes; and they would be, in terms of ~~the suspicions and the DRV activities~~ the first drops would be unannounced, but international newsmen could be briefed in a backgrounder fairly early, and photographers could be encouraged to inspect and photograph the materiel before delivery, or even to accompany some drops. It would be intended that a wide sample of the weapons (if not all) should be captured by the DRV. ~~Takekeep NVN internal security forces occupied~~ There would be obscurity (or even exaggeration) concerning the total numbers of weapons to be returned, and a variety of deception measures could multiply the effects of the program in keeping NVN internal security forces fully occupied. Meanwhile, the publicity on the program would be a dramatic way of reminding an international ~~wide~~ audience of the role of continuing infiltration from the Communist Bloc.
4. The weapons would be landed ready for use, accompanied by some such message as this: "This weapon was originally a gift from your Communist Chinese allies, for the purpose of killing Vietnamese. It was brought South by North Vietnamese soldiers, to be used on those, including women and children, who oppose Communism and do not want their country run secretly by the Chinese. We do not need these Chinese weapons in the South; so we are returning them to our brothers in the North, where perhaps they will be more appreciated."
5. Not only the consent, but the cooperation of Premier Ky would be essential, since nearly all these weapons are now in the hands of the GVN, primarily with field commanders who have so far hoarded them jealously. However, I think we might expect considerable GVN enthusiasm for this notion; partly because it is a (relatively restrained) way of following up on their talk ~~about~~ threatening the ~~st~~ existence of the North Vietnamese regime. ~~Takekeep~~ This same aspect would be regarded as a drawback in some quarters, of course; but since the arms in question are in limited supply, and "we are only returning to them the weapons they sent South illegally," I don't think we would be too vulnerable to the charge of changing our policy significantly.